

Remarks/Arguments

Initially, Applicant would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the acknowledgment of Applicant's Information Disclosure Statement by return of the Form PTO-1449, and for acknowledging Applicant's Claim for Priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document.

Applicant also acknowledges with appreciation the indication that claims 3-5, 7 and 11-13 contain allowable subject matter (*see* paragraph 20 on page 8 of the Official Action).

Upon entry of the above amendments, the Drawings, the Specification, and claims 1, 5, 7, 10 and 11 will have been amended, claims 2-3 and 14-17 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein, and claims 18 and 19 will have been added. Claims 1, 4-13, 18 and 19 are currently pending. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the outstanding objection and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

Drawing Objections

In the Official Action, the Examiner objected to the Drawings.

More specifically, the Examiner indicated that Figs. 2a, 2b, 20 and 21 should be designated --Prior Art—and that reference sign "3U," in Fig. 12, is not mentioned in the Specification (*see* paragraphs 1 and 4 on pages 2 and 3 of the Official Action, respectively).

In this regard, Applicant is submitting replacement Figs. 2, 20 and 21 (which have been amended to include a --Prior Art—designation) herewith. Additionally, Applicant submits that the Specification has been amended, where appropriate, to mention the

reference sign "3U."

Accordingly, the objection to the drawings are believed to be moot and should be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112 because the recitation of the connection portion lacked proper antecedent basis. Without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection, Applicant has amended claim 1, where appropriate, in order to address the Examiner's concerns.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 is improper and should be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over that which is known in the art; and

the Examiner rejected claim 10 as being unpatentable over that which is known in the art, and further in view of Japanese Publication Furuta et al. (10-121599).

Without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's rejections, Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to generally incorporate the features recited in dependent claim 3 which the Examiner has indicated as containing allowable subject matter (see, paragraph 20 on page 8 of the Official Action).

Thus, Applicant submits that claims 4-13 depending therefrom, have also been placed in allowable form. Additionally, Applicant has canceled claims 2, 3 and 14-17 without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter contained therein.

Therefore, Applicant submits that it is not necessary to discuss the

appropriateness of the above-listed rejections.

***Request for An Early Indication of Allowance
of All of the Pending Claims***

Additionally, Applicant submits that new independent claims 18 and 19 are also allowable. In this regard, Applicant submits that independent claim 18 generally corresponds to claim 7 (*which the Examiner indicated as containing allowable subject matter*) written into independent form and claim 19 generally corresponds to claim 11 (*which the Examiner also indicated as containing allowable subject matter*) written into independent form.

In view of the amendments and remarks herein, Applicant submits that independent claim 1 (amended to incorporate the features of dependent claim 3 which the Examiner indicated as containing allowable subject matter) is in condition for allowance. Further, Applicant submits that independent claims 18 and 19 are also patentable over the applied prior art, claim 18 generally corresponding to the features of claim 7 written into independent form and claim 19 generally corresponding to the features of claim 11 written into independent form.

With regard to dependent claims 4-13, Applicant asserts that these claims are allowable on their own merit, as well as because of their dependencies from claim 1, which is allowable for reasons discussed supra.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims in the present application are clearly patentable over the references cited by the Examiner, either alone or in combination, and an indication to such effect is respectfully requested, in due course.

Comments on Reasons for Allowance

In response to the Statement of Reasons for Allowance, contained in paragraphs 20-26, beginning on page 8 of the Official Action dated October 20, 2008, Applicant wishes to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. In this regard, while Applicant does not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, Applicant submits that each of the claims in the present application recite a particular combination of features, and that the basis for patentability of each of these claims is based on the totality of the particular features recited therein.


SUMMARY

Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests an indication to that effect. Applicant has demonstrated the allowability of the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the claims therein are respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

Applicant notes that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment. All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
Kiyoshi AIDA



William Boshnick
Reg. No. 44,550

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GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1950 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191

Enoch E. Peavey
Reg. No. 57,686

Attachments: 2 Replacement Sheets of Drawings.